

SPECIAL REPORT: SOLVING NYC'S HOUSING CRISIS P 6-7

THE INDYPENDENT

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So Now What?
SEE A.K. GUPTA p9



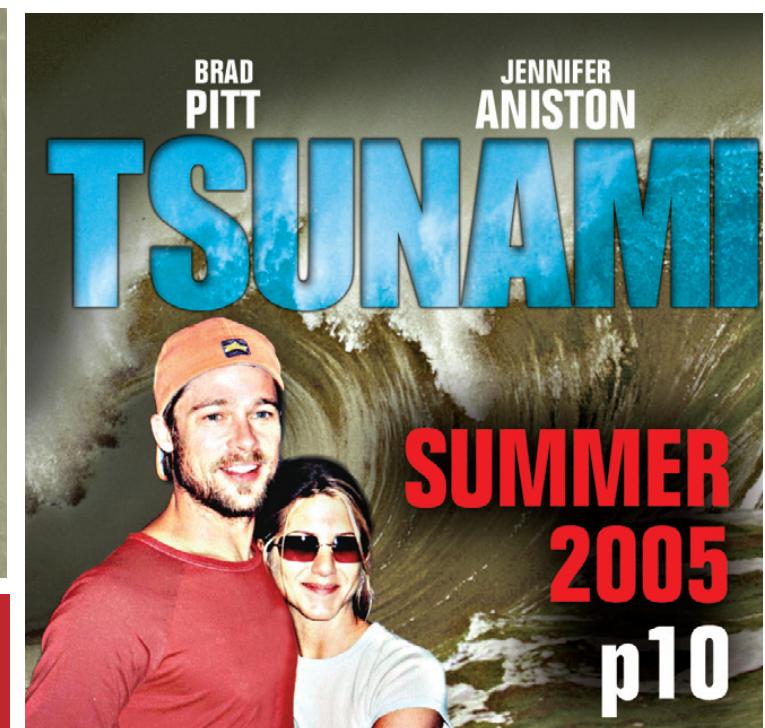
Meet Bush's
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DEATH OF A
TRADESMAN

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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 120 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The *Indypendent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Indypendent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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Interview

Homeland Insecurity

CHERTOFF APPOINTMENT SPARKS DISMAY IN NYC IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

BY MIKE SCHUWERK

As the federal government prepares to triple the capacity of its immigrant detention centers, Michael Chertoff – the man who spearheaded sweeping arrests of hundreds, and more likely thousands, of immigrants in the New York area – will most likely move on to implement similar policies as Secretary of Homeland Security. *The Indypendent* spoke with Monami Maulik, founder of the anti-detention group Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) about Chertoff's nomination and the growing homeland security industry.

MS: What are your thoughts on Michael Chertoff's nomination to be the next secretary of Homeland Security?

MM: The initial reaction was that this was a guy that played a major role in the post 9-11 roundups and detentions, particularly of Arab, South Asian and Muslim men. It is quite an insult that he's now going to be the head of the Department of Homeland Security. It's going to be a very harsh four years.

Chertoff headed the Department of Justice's criminal division from 2001 to 2003. How did he respond to 9-11 locally?

Immediately after 9-11 the government's eventual report said up to 800, but doing this work on the ground our understanding was that it was several thousand Arab, South Asian and Muslim men were rounded up through collaboration between state and local police, the FBI, and the INS, and were detained pretty much indefinitely. The men for the most part were held not on any criminal charges, or charges related to terrorism, but as so-called material witnesses. Our understanding is that there were over 2,000 or perhaps many more men held as material witnesses, for as long as three months to over a year. Most of these men eventually were deported, not based on criminal violations or because they were shown to have anything to do with terrorism, but based on civil immigration violations.

Did anything change after the Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General criticized these detentions in his report?

The report interviewed and documented the conditions of 800 post 9-11 detainees within Passaic County Jail and the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn. It focused on



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MONAMI MAULIK, founder of Desis Rising Up & Moving fights detention of Arabs, South Asians and Muslim immigrants.

those two facilities. Post 9-11 detainees were held in 10 to 15 facilities. So it didn't document all of the conditions. The report did condemn using this method of pre-emptive attack, going out and finding people who are potential terrorists, racially profiling them and targeting them. But what we've seen is that the DOJ has continued policies that have the same impact in different ways, such as the Special Registration Program. After this report was produced there was no point where the heads of the DOJ or the government apologized or acknowledged that this had happened, but instead implemented the Special Registration Program which was a new phase of racial profiling and targeting of the same communities.

How have the detentions impacted immigrant communities?

Just for our membership alone we've seen

over 250-300 of our members deported. All of those, primarily men, have left behind children and wives here in New York whose families have been devastated. We've heard in the Pakistani community that a quarter of the population is now gone, largely because of the detentions and deportations but also because families went underground or tried to seek asylum in Canada. To this day we're losing people as a result of these policies.

It has become a situation where communities live in constant fear of not just law enforcement, but of simple day to day things like going to emergency rooms and hospitals, going to renew food stamps, going to the Department of Motor Vehicles to renew a driver's license. This level of collaboration with Immigration, the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Motor Vehicles, welfare, hospitals, police makes communities live in constant fear to access basic services and move about in their communities.

Are the violations people are being deported for normally enforced?

Absolutely not. They still are not enforced. The number of absconders – people with deportation orders in their name – is huge, it's several hundred thousand. What the DOJ did after 9-11 was produce a list of about 6,000 of those people who were of Muslim, South Asian and Arab background and go around knocking on doors and workplaces looking for people with these names. It was racial profiling.

The intelligence reform bill passed by Congress in December adds 40,000 beds to federal detention centers over the next five years. What do you see as the national implications of Chertoff's appointment?

I think it is going to accelerate the creation of a very massive immigrant enforcement and detention system that is going to mirror the existing prison industrial complex. I see it as part of a plan to create a large immigrant enforcement system that, like the prison system, makes profits for a lot of private corporations and allows the government to continue pointing the finger and focus on enforcement and carry out the domestic war on terror, particularly against people of color and immigrant communities.

For more information: drumnation.org

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Times Up!
49 E. Houston St.

Lotus Café
Clinton & Stanton Sts.

Key Foods
Ave. A & E. 4th St.

May Day Books at
Theater for the New
City
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(between 9th & 10th Sts.)

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126 Crosby St.

LGBT Center
213 W. 13th St.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Revolution Books
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Chelsea Sq. Diner
23rd St. & 9th Ave.

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Laundrocenter
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Labyrinth Books
536 W. 112th St.

Kim's Books
113th St. & Broadway

Strictly Roots
Restaurant
123rd & Adam Clayton Powell

Coogan's Bar
169th St. & Broadway

Cafe Seven
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Fort Washington Bakery & Deli

808 W. 181st St.

Jumpin' Jalapenos
W. 207th St.

(between B'wy & Vermillya)

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Vox Pop

1022 Cortelyou Rd.

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218 Bedford Ave.

Tillie's of Brooklyn

248 Dekalb Ave.

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Halcyon

227 Smith St.

Moda Cafe

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BAM

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Union St. @ 7th Ave.

9th St. @ 7th Ave.

Atlantis Super Laundry Center

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35th St. & 34th Ave.

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East Elmhurst Library

95-06 Astoria Blvd.

Jackson Heights Library

35-51 81st St.

Friend's Tavern

78-11 Roosevelt Ave.

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100-01 Northern Blvd.

Café Aubergine

49-22 Skillman Ave.

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Book Value

Broadway between

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BRONX

Bronx Museum

165th St. & Grand Concourse

The Point

940 Garrison Ave.

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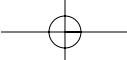
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UNGOVERNABLE: Police clash with a post-parade street party.



NO EASY CORONATION

Rowdy Protests Disrupt Streets of D.C. For Bush Inauguration

J20 Reports from US.Indymedia.org

SANTA CRUZ: More than 400 protesters turned out for a march and rally. Gathering on the steps of the county courthouse, people heard musicians and speakers before collectively taking an oath of office as President Pro-Tem of the United States. Since no Bibles were on hand, a copy of Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* was used.

PHILADELPHIA: 200 marchers converged on City Hall.

WESTERN MASS: Amid drumming, songs and lively chants, demonstrators made it abundantly clear to onlookers that they were entirely opposed to "a \$40 million pep rally for the second stolen election."

SAN FRANCISCO: 8,000 people marched.

PORTLAND: Two people locked themselves to gas station pumps at a Chevron station.

LOS ANGELES: Several thousand people marched.

AUSTIN: Hundreds marched, including Critical Mass bike riders. Police randomly arrested people and 'tasered' at least one youth.

MILWAUKEE: Several hundred protested.

TUCSON: 400-500 people marched downtown in front of the Federal Building.

NEW ORLEANS: 1,500 protested, twice the size of previous anti-war marches.

ATLANTA: 450 gathered to stand in solidarity with those in D.C. and in dozens of other cities across the nation. The chant was "No Mandate."

LAS VEGAS: 25 protested.

MINNEAPOLIS: Seventy-five people braved the cold and snow to protest Bush's inauguration, and marched to a local army recruiting station.

Despite claims of a mandate, massive protests disrupted George W. Bush's inauguration in Washington D.C. as hecklers lined the parade route and clashed with police, at one point bringing the president's motorcade to a halt. Police deployed pepper spray and batons throughout the day and arrested at least 13 people.

One of the largest events was a permitted rally and march hosted by the D.C. Anti-War Network (DAWN) and supported by Code Pink, Mobilization for Global Justice and several other anti-war groups. Organizers estimated the crowd at over 3,000. Additional protests were organized by International ANSWER right on the parade route and Washington D.C. anarchists throughout the city.

As the march turned toward McPherson Square, a much smaller group broke off and 17 members of DAWN held a pre-planned "die-in," covering parts of their clothes, faces and hands with fake blood and lying in the intersection.

The Black Bloc, a militant protest tactic where demonstrators dress alike to avoid police identification.

cation also made a dramatic reappearance.

"We're anarchists, socialist, all kinds of people," a woman going by the name Blood Red said of the two to three hundred people gathering at the entrance to Chinatown in preparation to return to the parade route. "Everybody over here wants liberation. It's not just about Bush, it's about the whole system."

Police closed in on them, forcing hundreds of protesters parallel to the parade but several blocks and some rather large fences away. With police in slow pursuit, several in the group employed wooden pallets and overturned orange construction barrels as barricades while one young protester ran along the side of the street spray-painting red swaths on several cars and sports utility vehicles.

Along the Inaugural Parade route, thousands of demonstrators mixed with Bush supporters, wielding protest signs and chanting at the passing festivities.

Lines to enter the parade snaked entire city blocks in the city's northwest quadrant, demonstrators standing cheek by jowl with Bush supporters all vied for a

fleeting opportunity to get their message out to Bush.

Following the appearance of Bush's motorcade, demonstrators lit two American flags on fire and received a chemical hosing as city police emptied canister upon canister of pepper spray and Bush supporters rained ice down on them from a neighboring balcony.

Later in the day, protesters gathered near Union Station to crash an inaugural party. The counter-party, dubbed the "Got Freedom? Inaugural Ball," organized by Code Pink, The Ronald Reagan Home for the Criminally Insane and others, eventually overwhelmed police who gave up trying to corral the demonstrators onto a sidewalk area across from the official event.

Anarchist groups went trashing in the trendy Adams Morgan neighborhood when a group of between one and two hundred young people poured out of a punk show brandishing torches and smashing up corporate businesses, including Riggs Bank and Citibank.

This report was adapted from a New Standard report by Brendan Coyne & Ariella Cohen; and posts on D.C. and NYC Indymedia.

ANTRIM CASKEY

from the newswire

Militants Rise Again

HOURS AFTER the main protests along the inaugural route, 150 young anarchists poured out of a punk show in the Adams Morgan neighborhood carrying torches and smashing up banks, police cars and a D.C. police substation. The incident was the third reported clash between anti-authoritarians and police during the inauguration.

Discussion about the return of militant tactics flared across the Indymedia network, particularly at dc.indymedia.org. Using an 'open-publishing' system that doesn't track the IP addresses of users, hundreds of people debated the significance of political militancy and the role of anarchists. The following excerpts are edited for clarity. —JB

Hm: The targets of the vandalism were Citibank, a well-known urban slumlord and global destroyer of the environment; McDonalds and Taco Bell are notoriously bad and Riggs Bank is closely tied to CIA brutality and helped [former Chilean dictator] Pinochet hide millions. The march did not smash up Adams Morgan boutiques, bodegas or local shops.

Bung: The anarchists finally carried out their plans for a "riot." Hmmm, let me check... Yup, the war's still going. Okay...NEXT!

Mung: The liberals carried out their plans for a "peaceful protest." Hmmm, let me check... Yup, the war's still going. Okay...NEXT!

Fired Up: There is obviously a need for more militant action right now in the most effective, organized and thought-out way possible. Many kids got away with it. That's an accomplishment.

Drew Poe: People came out to show the State, the world and each other that we are still here. It is possible to confront it. It's important to not only focus on the horrors of this government and its imperialism, but on what we can do about it and that what we do can have an effect.

Tothebarricades.tk: If we keep trying to make ourselves "look good" to the bourgeois corporate media, we're not going to have any sort of "revolution."

@witness: Saying we should only be "non-violent" is the same as saying we should only be "violent" to bring change. We all need to support a diversity of tactics.

Boo: "True revolutionaries begin in the heart," said Che. How can we win by playing the game of our oppressor?

Chilling: I've always been an anarchist, but I'm older now... I'm realizing that direct action at protests doesn't do much at all. If you want to start a revolution, that is best left to back-rooms where it is most effective... but in the public eye, it just makes all of us look bad. Really this is what it's about: getting our message across. This really hit me hard when I heard someone say to their child in response to a question: "They want to destroy their own country..." That is completely the wrong answer. We don't want to destroy our own country, we want to save it from the people who actually really are destroying it.

Eric Blair: To only look at the military-like aspects misses the main point that this is a political struggle. Bush is a small part of a bigger system.

This NY @ Salutes You: The days of marching around in circles are over. Days of insurrection lie ahead. Fascism may be coming to America, but it's gonna have a damn hard time with resistance like this. More fire.

APOC (Don't Call Me Patriot): Our ideas, our politics, our actions keep changing and our actions will keep changing. We do work where we live that keeps changing. We're not trying to "save" this country at all, the American project is a murderous, racist, sexist, imperialist, genocidal project. It began that way and is still that way, no matter what words they use to dress it up.



MINNEAPOLIS.INDYMEDIA.ORG

News Analysis

Breaking Consensus

BY JED BRANDT

The Black Bloc made a dramatic return to form, disrupting Bush's inaugural celebration and announcing to the world that "he's not our president."

Direct action is more than just smashing bank windows, even if that is one bright color on the palette. It is about making the changes we want to see instead of merely engaging in symbolic petitions and placard-waving. Militancy in and of itself doesn't escape that dynamic, but it does break the false consensus of loyal opposition and let the world know that some Americans get it.

Welcome to the Loony Bin

Bush has been restocking the upper echelons of his administration as he moves into his second term. For every high profile loyalist like a Condoleezza Rice or Alberto Gonzales (not to mention Bernie Kerik), many other right-wing radicals have sailed into high office almost unnoticed. —Mike Burke



**White House
Domestic Policy
Advisor**

Claude Allen

On Jan. 6 Bush tapped this former Jesse Helms aide to become his new Domestic Policy Advisor in a move seen as a major victory for Christian fundamentalists. In the *LA Weekly*, Doug Ireland described Allen as a "notorious homophobe, a ferocious enemy of abortion and an opponent of

safe-sex education who for years has been one of the AIDS community's principal enemies."

During his three-year stint as Deputy Health and Human Services Secretary, Ireland reports, Allen led a witch-hunt that investigated all of the AIDS service organizations receiving any federal funding including New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis.

Allen first came to prominence in the early 1980s when he became one of Helms' first African-American aides. In 1984 Allen accused a Democratic opponent of Helms as having ties "with the queers" and "radical feminists."

Bush had nominated him for a seat on the 4th Circuit U.S. Appeals court in 2003, but he failed to receive Senate confirmation.

**Energy Secretary Nominee
Samuel Bodman**

Nuclear and energy lobbyists must have been rejoicing when President Bush nominated Samuel Bodman to head the Department of Energy. Overseeing the country's energy policy will soon be a man who advocates for the construction of new nuclear plants and who has vowed to be an "energetic advocate" for opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil and gas drilling.

A Bush loyalist, Bodman has worked in the administration since 2001, first as deputy commerce secretary then deputy treasury secretary. The Sierra Club criticized his hands-off position on global warming when he oversaw the work of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency. Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope said, "He was literally in charge of watching the polar ice caps melt."

Before he took public office, Bodman headed the Texas-based chemical company Cabot. Twice during his tenure, the government fined Cabot for failing to report hazardous spills and not complying with federal cleanup orders. *Counterpunch* reports that in 1997 Cabot's refineries released 54,000 tons of toxic emissions into the air making it the state's fourth worst toxic polluter.



**Health & Human Services Nominee
Michael Leavitt**

"Extremely anti-choice" is how Senator Jon Corzine describes Bush's nominee who will oversee the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the Indian Health Service.

Leavitt, the current head of the Environmental Protection Agency, also opposes stem cell research.

As governor of Utah he oversaw a controversial overhaul of Medicaid that cut health care for the poorest Medicaid beneficiaries to pay for inadequate health benefits for others.

Leavitt, a Mormon, also has deep ties to the insurance industry. He is the former president and CEO of the Leavitt Group, the nation's 27th largest insurance company. His brother now heads the company but he still maintains an investment worth between \$5 and \$25 million.



The Marriage of Church & State

Bush Bypasses Congress to Expand Faith-Based Programs

BY DON MONKERUD

The Bush administration's expansion of faith-based social service programs may be creating an "unbridgeable divide" between religious groups and secular interests.

When Congress refused to pass President Bush's proposals to lower the long-standing barriers against spreading the gospel in publicly funded social service programs, Bush used administrative rules to integrate religion into social welfare programs.

Bush set up faith-based offices in ten federal agencies including the Department of Agriculture, the Agency for International Development and the Department of Commerce, increased funding for religious-sponsored programs and connected a vast network of religious groups, which Republicans appealed to in the 2004 election.

Such changes now allow churches to discriminate based on religious belief, and to use federal funds to renovate and build places of worship. In practical terms, religion is creeping into government-sponsored social services as never before.

Once considered a "cult," Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church now receive government grants to teach "healthy marriage" programs. Josephine Hauer, a Unification leader, works for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and told a seminar of religious leaders in Oakland, California, "I want to make this a marriage culture." The seminar was sponsored by a \$366,179 grant from HHS.

Richard Panzer, another Unification leader, runs Free Teens USA, which received a \$475,000 grant for after-school abstinence programs in New Jersey. David Cappra, former president of a group funded by Moon's Washington Times Foundation, currently



runs the U.S. Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees groups such as the AmeriCorps Vista program.

Although he criticized the Faith-Based Initiative as "a Pandora's box," Pat Robertson, founder of the right-wing Christian Coalition, received a \$500,000 grant from HHS for Operation Blessing to support international hunger relief.

Overall in 2003, the number of religious groups receiving HHS funding increased 41 percent from 483 to 680 programs in 2003, and now account for \$1.17 billion of social service funds. Florida even has a "faith-based" prison — the first in the nation.

According to Wilfred McClay, professor of history and humanities at the University of Tennessee, Bush's changes are "a dramatic change" from past practices. The push to encourage religious groups to address social problems is a continuation of Clinton's welfare reform, which allowed religious organizations to compete for social welfare service funds.

McClay points out that the separation of church and state goes back to early American church leaders such as Roger Williams. McClay predicts that there will be "lots of rhetoric" but not much legislative or executive action on the issue in the coming four years. "Misgivings about emphasizing the 'armies of compassion' don't always come from secular groups," McClay emphasizes, "but also from religious groups afraid that their religious mission will be corrupted by government money."

Tom Barry, policy director for the Interhemispheric Resource Center, traces religious involvement in government from Ronald Reagan, who based U.S. foreign policy on moral clarity combined with military might. Since then, a number of think tanks along with conservative and neo-conservative groups began framing foreign policy in moral terms.

"These groups want to spread Judeo-Christian values around the world," says Barry. "They support a national security policy based

on preventive war to spread U.S. ethical and moral values as superior to other values."

Bush contributed to the so-called cultural wars by rejecting the separation of church and state "in favor of rhetorical and policy initiatives that brought religion not only into the public sphere but also directly into government," says Barry.

Right-wing policy groups are also infiltrating the United Nations, which the Christian Right formerly criticized as secular in order to reshape the U.N. agenda. Groups such as the Family Research Council and the American Life League are seeking U.N. status to oppose abortion, restrict women's rights to birth control and promote "traditional values."

While there is opposition to integrating government and religion within the religious community, Mark Silk, director of the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College, finds that Bush is relying upon an activist base of Republicans composed primarily of white evangelicals.

Historically, religious leaders opposed government funding of religious groups primarily because of anti-Catholicism. "There was no way conservative Protestants wanted to underwrite a Catholic parochial education," says Silk. "But after Protestants established their own schools to avoid integration, they changed."

Whether religious belief helps people overcome social problems remains to be seen, but Silk points out that many religious groups, such as Catholic Charities, chose to become secular social service providers. The friction begins when they proselytize and become political.

"It's tough when issues become identified in religious communities as matters of faith rather than public issues that need compromise," Silk says. "There's always a concern when religion creates an unbridgeable divide."

DEATH OF A TRADESMAN

A Corrupt Industry Killed My Father

President George W. Bush is urging Congress to change the way people are compensated for diseases caused by asbestos, claiming frivolous lawsuits are bankrupting companies and causing people to lose jobs. My jaw dropped upon learning this. How could anyone defend corporations that had manufactured such a deadly substance and hid all evidence of its harmful effects for decades?

BY WILLIAM BRANDON JOURDAN

Five years ago, my father, William Wayne Jourdan, died of mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer caused by asbestos. He was an insulation worker for 34 years. I had never heard of mesothelioma until a month before his death. My family didn't know that he was dying until then, but he had been ill for around six months. In that time period, he lost 60 pounds and could barely breathe. It was difficult watching a strong working man grow weak and helpless. The man who would brag about squatting 400 pounds and his ability to work 12-hour days turned into someone who could not leave a hospital bed or breathe without the aid of a respirator. He was a proud, well-respected man in the small southern town where we lived. His death was incredibly hard for my family.

Upon discovering that my father's illness was caused by his exposure to asbestos, my brother did some research and found a lawyer to file suit against the companies responsible. This decision ended up saving my family from poverty. After my father's death, we were left with over \$70,000 of medical bills, a mortgage that was far from being paid, and my college bills. My mother was struggling to pay her high medical bills because of her recurring problems with melanoma. A year after my father's death, we were awarded a settlement that allowed us to pay off much of the debt that we had accumulated following his passing.

The Environmental Working Group estimates that since 1979 up to 230,000 Americans have died as a result of exposure to asbestos. People who work with asbestos are 20 times more likely to develop lung cancer than smokers. Other than lung cancer, there are two signature illnesses from asbestos, asbestosis and mesothelioma, both affecting the respiratory system. Workers who continually inhale asbestos fibers also swallow them, which raises the likelihood of developing gastrointestinal (GI) cancers. The link between asbestos and GI can-

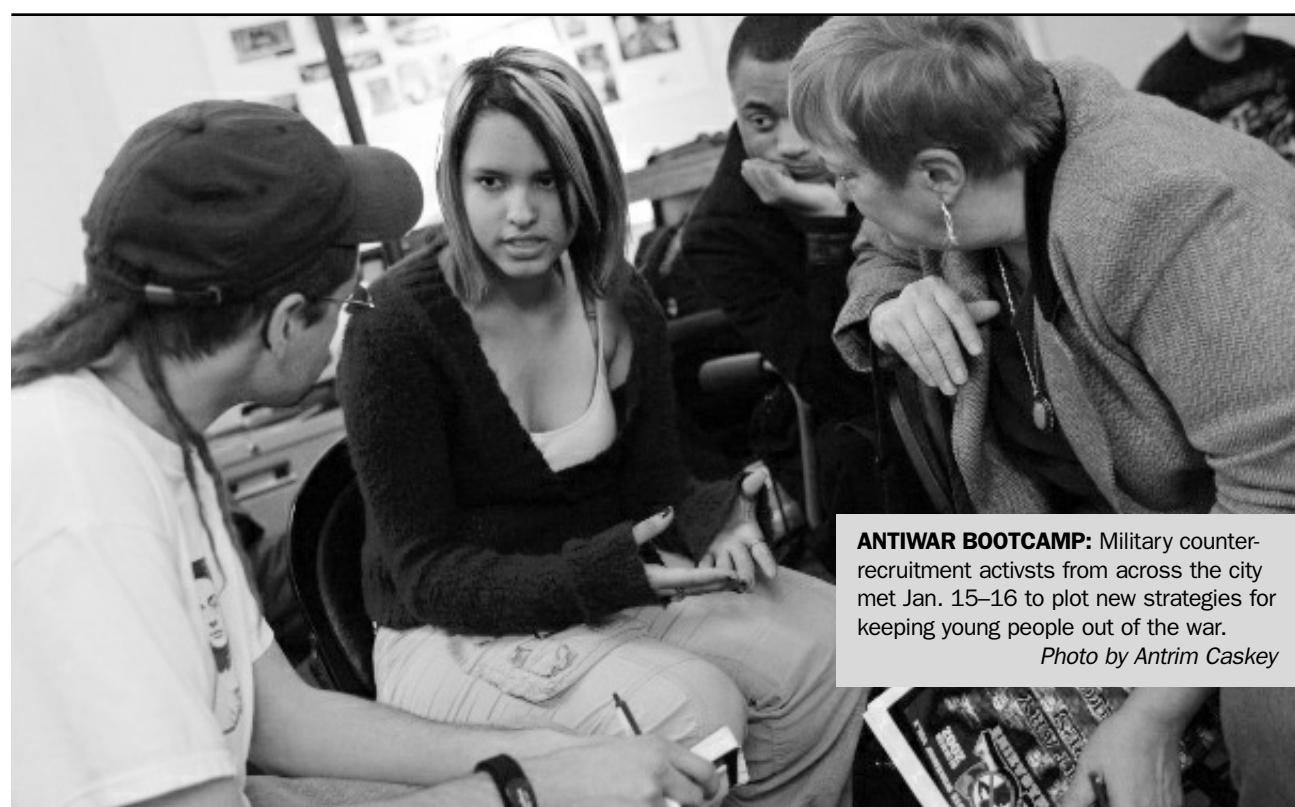
cer is contested by the asbestos industry and its insurance companies, but the Occupational Health and Safety Administration and World Health Organization have concluded that asbestos does cause GI cancer.

Despite all of the dangers of asbestos, it is still legal within the United States. Asbestos companies became aware of the deadliness of their products in the 1930s, but did nothing about it. In fact, many companies aggressively resisted requests for financial or medical aid and support. They hid unambiguous scientific evidence of asbestos-related injury and death. The asbestos industry and its insurers offered no meaningful solutions until a small number of people went to court seeking justice and began to win.

Halliburton, a company formerly run by Vice President Dick Cheney, has two subsidiaries that manufactured asbestos, KBR and DII. When Bush referred to companies that were being forced into bankruptcy, he was referring to these among others. Both have filed Chapter 11. This doesn't mean they are liquidating their assets and closing their doors. Chapter 11 allows a company to dodge litigation, consolidate liability, and protect the company and all of its subsidiaries from future liability. For years, these Halliburton subsidiaries have used Chapter 11 to fight paying the money they originally agreed to pay the families of asbestos victims. Chapter 11 was amended by Congress in 1994 to provide special protection for companies with asbestos liability (Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1994). As a result of DII and KBR filing for a Chapter 11, many families received only a portion of their settlements, on grounds that these companies are bankrupt.

Now Bush is saying that these companies need additional protection from "frivolous lawsuits." The money trail leads straight to the White House. Cheney's former company and others are suffering after producing a material that killed hundreds of thousands of workers. I for one feel no sympathy. As for the claim that many of those filing lawsuits have not yet contracted cancer, this seems natural: once someone develops a disease such as mesothelioma, they have less than two years to live. Filing a lawsuit as soon as any medical problems surface could help a family pay for the medical bills that pile up once the condition develops into full-fledged cancer.

The asbestos epidemic is a public health crisis, not a bankruptcy crisis. Tort reform will allow large corporations guilty of serious crimes to avoid litigation. Bush sees the companies as the victims of relentless lawsuits, when the real victims are those who have been exposed to the deadly products of this corrupt industry. Workers exposed to asbestos had no idea of the serious effects of exposure. Victims of asbestos exposure should not have to wait until their deathbed to receive compensation. If Bush is really interested in fixing the asbestos litigation problem, he should push for a complete ban on all products containing asbestos.



ANTIWAR BOOTCAMP: Military counter-recruitment activists from across the city met Jan. 15–16 to plot new strategies for keeping young people out of the war.

Photo by Antrim Caskey

GOP SEEKS TO LIMIT ANTI-CORPORATE 'LIABILITY' LAWSUITS

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

Speaking in Illinois on Jan. 5, President Bush referred to two physicians who scaled back their practice due to a doubling of medical malpractice insurance premiums. He said "junk lawsuits" were the reason rural areas were underserved by doctors.

His plan of action? Eliminate class action suits, impose caps on damages, and require plaintiffs to produce greater evidence of malpractice before punitive damages can be awarded. Currently, anyone who is injured can file suit in state court and attempt to prove that the defendant caused their injury.

A judge or jury assesses the amount of damages, taking into account the blameworthy conduct of the person or company sued. Class action suits have been especially effective in protecting consumers because they allow large groups of people to stand trial at once and punish companies who profit at the expense of their customers' safety.

When Bush entered the Texas Governor's mansion in 1995, he proclaimed there was a "state of emergency" in the civil justice system, and he made tort reform his first priority. Now that he is in the White House, he blames tort lawyers for "clogging your local courts" and proposes to send tort cases into federal courts, which lack judges and are overburdened with drug felonies.

Though Bush claims that the courts are "tilted toward plaintiffs' lawyers," nationally, only 48 percent of tort plaintiffs who go to trial prevail over the defendant.

Corporate America Tries To Escape Accountability

The American Tort Reform Association (ATRA) is a coalition of more than 300 corporations and associations that seek immunity from lawsuits. Since 1991, it has funded 27 active groups in 18 states to weaken state tort laws. One theme of their media campaign is that juries are out of control. To end the problem, they propose to impose monetary caps on non-economic ("pain and suffering") and punitive damages.

But Public Citizen, a national consumer advocacy group, points to a 2000 Department of Justice study that determined punitive damages were only awarded in 3.3 percent of all state tort trials, and that the average award was only \$38,000. The same study showed that between 1992 and 1996, the average jury award actually declined 47 percent, from \$57,000 to \$30,000. The median final award of all personal injury lawsuits in state courts was \$31,000.

And there is no evidence that damage caps would reduce practitioners' insurance premiums. ATRA hasn't been able to name any states in which premiums have decreased following implementation of "tort reform."

In New Jersey, in June 2002, an assemblyman convened hearings and asked Patricia Costante, CEO of a malpractice insurer, "[A]re you telling the insured physicians in New Jersey that if this State Legislature passes caps that you'll guarantee that you won't raise your premiums, in fact, you'll reduce them?" Costante replied: "No, I'm not telling you [or them] that."

During Bush's tenure as governor, the state of Texas passed a law changing the standard of evidence required to obtain punitive damages from a mere "preponderance of the evidence" to "clear and convincing evidence" of malfeasance. It also nullified joint and several liability, which awarded damages against any other parties who contributed to the plaintiff's injury. ATRA calls this the "deep pocket" clause, because in practice the defendant with the most money will be the one required to pay for all of the injuries.

Now, Texas plaintiffs will have the additional burden of showing that one company had at least 51 percent responsibility for the injury before any money can be awarded. Therefore, if two parties are equally liable for an injury, there can be no recovery.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, eliminating all of the costs of medical malpractice would only cut the total amount spent on health care by one-half of one percent. We do have a problem, and it's the right wing's plan for tort reform.

The People's Lawyer is a project of the National Lawyers Guild, NYC Chapter. Contact the chapter at www.nlgnyc.org or at (212) 679-6018.

**THE
PEOPLE'S
LAWYER**

HOUSING GROUPS BATTLE FOR BATTERY PARK \$\$

"This is a problem that has gone without a solution for two decades," says an organizer for Feb. 2 march on City Hall.

When the Battery Park City Authority wrote up plans for their 91-acre development on August 18, 1969, they envisioned an unprecedented New York City utopia of class and racial harmony.

BY KIERA BUTLER

"One-third of these apartments are to be low income, one-third middle income, one-third conventionally financed units," wrote the planners. "The units will be thoroughly mixed throughout the project to create an economically and racially integrated community without enclaves of high or low rent housing."

Shortly after Battery Park City opened in 1980, the area became one of the most desirable places to live in New York. The river views and the development's proximity to Wall Street drove its real-estate value higher and higher, and no one wanted to squander apartments that could draw top rents on low- and middle-income tenants.

By 1986, New York needed affordable housing even more than it had in 1969. So the city came up with a new plan: Mayor Edward Koch and Governor Mario Cuomo promised to spend \$400 million of the revenue earned from Battery Park City to build new low- and middle-income housing units. Three years later, Koch promised \$600 million more for the same purpose.

The city hasn't come close to keeping its promise, according to housing-advocacy groups such as Housing First!, The Coalition for the Homeless and the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning. Since 1986, only \$143 million of the intended \$1 billion has gone toward affordable housing.

"This is a problem that has gone without a solution for two decades," says Jennifer Flynn of the New York City AIDS Housing Network. "It's been a crisis for so long that people don't think of it as such."

In the next three years, Flynn said, officials expect the city to earn an average of \$75 million per year from Battery Park City. The new Goldman-Sachs headquarters in the complex is expected to be completed in 2009, and according to Housing First!, the city will get priority on permanent housing.

Forcing the city to live up to these promises is one of the five main demands of the Housing Here and Now March and Rally, scheduled for 4:30 p.m. Feb. 2 at City Hall. The organizers, a coalition of more than 60 community groups, housing-advocacy groups, labor unions, AIDS organizations and clergy, will propose a "tiered plan" for the Battery Park City revenue to city officials.

The plan calls for the city to use one-eighth of the revenue



A Lower Manhattan resident takes her dog for a winter stroll in Battery Park City. PHOTO: ANTRIM CASKEY

toward housing for people who make less than \$17,000 annually, half for those who make between \$18,000 and \$33,000, another eighth for those who make between \$33,000 and \$44,000, and the remaining fourth for those who make over \$44,000 per year.

The participants will also urge officials to preserve rent controls, adopt zoning plans that include affordable housing, help the city gain control over rent laws that are currently under state jurisdiction and ensure that AIDS patients in temporary housing get priority on permanent housing.

Flynn said that the organizers chose those issues because they are specific "things local officials can act on right away." Julie Miles, a rally organizer who works for the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning, said she expects 5,000 people to attend.

COMMUTING FROM PENNSYLVANIA

MAYORAL HOPEFULS LOOK FOR LANDLORD DOLLARS, TENANT VOTES

Despite the intensity of the crisis over the last 20 years, few politicians have made it a major issue. In fact, many who were once fiercely pro-tenant became remarkably tame when they ran for mayor. Former City Councilmember Ruth Messinger, who in 1988 sponsored a bill for commercial rent control, was largely quiet on the issue in 1997 when she ran against Rudolph Giuliani, even though the rent-control laws were expiring that year and Giuliani's record was abysmal. In 2001, Democratic candidate Mark Green tried to prove his centrist credentials by telling *The New York Times* that he would support high-rent decontrol, a 1990s loophole in the law that lets inflation eat away at the number of regulated apartments.

Mayor Bloomberg's record on housing is almost as bad as Giuliani's. His top priority has been using taxpayer money to turn Manhattan's far West Side into a thicket of luxury high-rises, his appointees to the city Rent Guidelines Board have mainly been rubber stamps for repeated rent increases, and he vetoed a bill to protect children from being poisoned by lead paint. The mayor's main achievements have been in promoting an initiative to build housing for the homeless and helping protect tenants in Mitchell-Lama middle-income projects from being evicted when their landlords withdraw from the program. But his support for Republicans in Washington and Albany aids the forces who are starving the city of housing funds and denying it control of its housing laws. Ultimately, he's an arrogant billionaire who's somewhere between clueless and contemptuous about how working-class people have to make the rent.

City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, the Democratic front-runner at least in fundraising, is a centrist who can be pushed in either direction. He was reluctant at first to support a

strong lead-paint bill, keeping it bottled up in the Council until it became obvious that the measure had enough support to override Bloomberg's veto. Miller's strongest point has been his work on the Mitchell-Lama issue, brokering deals to protect tenants from wholesale eviction, and he's endorsed repealing the state's Urstadt law. On the other hand, he has received substantial campaign contributions from real estate interests.

Miller's main rival, former Bronx borough president Fernando Ferrer, has deep roots in the Bronx Democratic machine, whose members have often voted against tenants on issues such as high-rent decontrol and lead paint. But in 2001, when he lost the Democratic primary to Mark Green, Ferrer ran a class-based campaign, billing himself as the candidate of "the other New York." Relatively quiet on tenant issues in the '90s, Ferrer endorsed a rent freeze in 2001 and advocated repeal of high-rent decontrol in 2003.

Another Democratic hopeful, Brooklyn Congressman Anthony Weiner, is not remembered fondly by tenant activists from his tenure in the City Council. In 1997, Weiner cosponsored a bill that would have let landlords certify that they had corrected violations themselves, instead of the city sending inspectors out to see if the repairs had actually been done.

Brooklyn City Councilmember Charles Barron is the most unequivocally radical candidate in the race. Once a Black Panther Party activist, he has been solidly pro-tenant in the Council, outspoken on issues like a living-wage bill, the proposed Brooklyn Nets arena and the need for affordable housing in general. However, he has not acquired enough power to make a significant difference.

—STEVEN WISHNIA



Shirlene Cooper of the New York City AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN) visits Bristow McDuffie, a resident of a building at 100 E. 124th St. that recently received 375 housing code violations. The HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA), has placed homeless clients in the building which is plagued by drug dealing, prostitution and feral cats. PHOTO: ANTRIM CASKEY

THE HOUSING CRISIS

What Needs to Be Done?

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

New York City's housing crisis is intense. The cost of housing is an integral and oppressive part of daily life as crime was 20 years ago. Everywhere you turn you hear people complaining about how much rent they have to pay, about not having enough space, or about bouncing around between sublets and awkward roommate situations. New Yorkers are up against two brutal realities: the rapaciousness of the city's housing market and the political power of real estate.

For those working within the system, the tenant movement has mainly focused on several reformist strategies: building more housing, primarily through "inclusionary zoning"; repealing the state's 1971 Urstadt law, which bans the city from enacting rent-control laws stronger than the state's; and pressuring politicians to preserve rent controls.

Inclusionary zoning requires developers to reserve a certain percentage of new buildings for affordable housing. In a time of scarce government housing funds – the federal government stopped financing new public-housing construction in the '90s – this tactic is attractive because it leverages private investment. The problem is that it can easily turn into "80-20 housing," in which developers get to build massive luxury high-rises in exchange for a token amount of affordable apartments. For example, only 25 percent of the 13,600 apartments in the \$3 billion West Side development plan approved by the City Council on Jan. 18 will be affordable – still an improvement on the 16 percent in Mayor Bloomberg's original scheme.

The Urstadt law was enacted as part of the disastrous 1971 decontrol of vacant apartments. It is the reason city voters had no power to stop the weakening of the state's rent-regulation laws in 1997 and 2003. Rent controls' fate is in the hands of legislators from upstate and the suburbs who take thousands of dollars in contributions from city landlords, but tenants in the city can't vote against them. That is a phenomenally undemocratic situation. But repeal of the Urstadt law is unlikely for the same reason that repeal of the Urstadt law is necessary: The Republicans who control the state Senate are not likely to bite the hands that fund them in order to help a bunch of working-class city dwellers get cheaper rent.

Other than squatting, though, activists have not developed many outside-the-system strategies for confronting the crisis. One encouraging trend comes from Boston, where tenants in several dozen buildings have organized and refused to pay rent increases until the landlord bargains with them collectively. This hasn't lowered rents or helped people looking for new apartments, but it has restrained the most outrageous rent increases. Some New York activists mooted the idea of a "citywide rent strike" in 1997, but the mainstream tenant movement backed off – it would have required organization at least 100 times greater than what the movement was capable of, and would have risked the eviction of thousands of people. (It also didn't help that the idea's loudest proponents included people considered "fringe" even in the squatter scene.)

Astronomical housing costs have not always been part of New York City life. As recently as 1980, it was not difficult to find apartments for under \$200 a month (the minimum wage then was \$3.10 an hour), and there were very few homeless people. But to bring rents down to where working-class people can afford them, tenants will probably need unprecedented degrees of organization and militancy, on the scale of the 1930s labor movement or the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott.

Steven Wishnia has been editor of Tenant/Inquilino, the Metropolitan Council on Housing's monthly newspaper, since 1995. The opinions here are his own.

TAKE THAT!

Bush Threatens New Round of Housing Cuts

BY NELL GEISER

A federal program that funds social programs and building maintenance for public housing throughout the country may soon be slashed in half. Congressional aides told the *Washington Post* that President Bush's proposed budget for fiscal year 2006 could cut the \$4.7 billion in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that go to city housing authorities by up to 50 percent, the first major cut in the program in its past three years. It's not new.

The proposed cuts to Community Development Block Grants come in the larger context of affordable housing shortages. For the second time in a year, New York – one of the tightest housing markets in the country – is facing a large shortfall in funds for Section 8 vouchers. This program gives low-income tenants funds to rent apartments from private landlords, paying the difference between 30 percent of the tenant's income and what HUD considers a fair rent for the area.

Congress recently changed the way Section 8 funding is calculated so that instead of looking at the average rent increase in a housing market, federal funding is pegged only to inflation-based cost of living increases. For New York, where HUD estimated that rents increased by 6.5 percent last year, the latest Section 8 allocation fell \$27 million short of covering current vouchers. That is almost half of the entire national shortfall of \$61 million – although New York City, which gets about 118,000 rent vouchers per year, has less than 10 percent of the 1.9 million households in the program nationwide. Keeping funds at current levels also wouldn't help the city reduce its waiting list for Section 8 vouchers, which was closed in 1994 and has more than 150,000 people on it.

Bush is asking urban areas and low-income residents, who voted against him overwhelmingly in the 2004 election, to bear the brunt of his budget cuts – but the reason is more likely ideological than revenge, says Victor Bach of the Community Service

Food or Rent: You Decide

While just about everybody pays high rents in New York, the city's housing crisis affects lower-income communities the most.

MOTT HAVEN/HUNTS POINT

Monthly Gross Rent (2002)	\$495
Yearly Gross Rent (2002)	\$5,940
Median Household Income (2002)	\$15,000
% of Income Spent on Rent	39.6
Weekly Disposable Income After Rent	\$174.23

BROWNSVILLE/OCEAN HEIGHTS

Monthly Gross Rent (2002)	\$625
Yearly Gross Rent	\$7,500
Median Household Income(2002)	\$27,000
% of Income Spent on Rent	27.6
Weekly Disposable Income After Rent	\$375.00

EAST HARLEM

Monthly Gross Rent (2002)	\$511
Yearly Gross Rent	\$6,132
Median Household Income (2002)	\$18,000
% of Income Spent on Rent	34.1
Weekly Disposable Income After Rent	\$228.23

UPPER EAST SIDE

Monthly Gross Rent (2002)	\$1,300
Yearly Gross Rent	\$15,600
Median Household Income (2002)	\$79,700
% of Income Spent on Rent	19.5
Weekly Disposable Income After Rent	\$1,219.23

Source: NYC Housing and Neighborhood Information System (NYCHANIS)
Research by Melissa Marrone of the Radical Reference Librarians • www.radicalreference.info

THE NEOCON ADVENTURE CONTINUES

With the new Bush administration only days old, the White House has left little doubt that the neoconservatives are in charge and the Bush policy of regime change won't end in Baghdad. Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has revealed that the Pentagon already has secretly sent troops into Iran to chart out potential targets. Secretary of State nominee Condoleezza Rice has dubbed the nations of Cuba, Burma, Belarus, Zimbabwe, North Korea and Iran to be "outposts of tyranny." Rice even had harsh words for Venezuela, describing the rule of democratically elected Hugo Chavez as "very deeply troubling." And the *Washington Post* reported the Bush administration has plans to send secret spy units into Somalia, Yemen, Indonesia, Philippines and Georgia. As for Iran, Vice President Dick Cheney has warned that Iran may soon be attacked. Hours before Bush's inauguration Cheney told Don Imus "the Israelis might well decide to act first, and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards."

OUR NEIGHBOR, THE EX-DEATH SQUAD LEADER

Former Haitian death squad leader and current New York resident Emmanuel "Toto" Constant has been sued by three Haitian women for committing torture, crimes against humanity and for terrorizing the Haitian population in the early 1990s.

While on the payroll of the CIA, Constant served as the leader of FRAPH, the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti. Human rights groups estimate that between 1991 and 1994, FRAPH killed thousands of supporters of Haitian president Jean Bertrand Aristide. Despite his bloody past, the U.S. government has allowed Constant to openly live on 225th Street in the Laurelton section of Queens.

Constant explained on "60 Minutes" in December 1995 why he may be getting special treatment. "If I am guilty of those crimes that they are accusing me of, the CIA is also guilty."

SCIENTISTS WARN TIME IS RUNNING OUT ON GLOBAL WARMING

A major new report by the International Climate Change Taskforce warns that within 10 years global warming could cause "widespread agricultural failure, water shortages and major droughts, increased disease, sea-level rise and the death of forests." The report also suggests that catastrophes such as the melting of the Greenland ice sheet, or the switching-off of the Gulf Stream, could take place.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT EVOKE CONTROVERSIAL PRIVILEGE

In a controversial move to block a lawsuit against John Ashcroft, the Department of Justice has invoked the states secrets privilege, which bars litigation that would expose protected information. This powerful and rarely used privilege is being employed to prevent the release of any details regarding the case of Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian citizen. In 2002, Arar was detained and questioned during a layover in JFK International Airport and then sent to Syria for interrogation. During his ten-month imprisonment in Syria, Arar claims he was tortured and held in a grave-like cell before the Canadian government secured his release. In his lawsuit, Arar alleges that he was a victim of the American government's policy of "extraordinary rendition" where authorities can circumvent restraints on interrogation tactics by extraditing suspects to countries that employ torture.



MAGGIE SULUS

Wave of the Future

SMALL ISLANDS FACE BIG THREATS

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. — Small island nations in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, the Caribbean and South China Seas are some of the most vulnerable countries in the world. Some of these islands are already struggling to stay afloat economically and politically, and some say that because of climate change, they may be physically submerged in the near future. Global warming, caused by fossil fuel emissions in the industrialized countries of the West, is raising sea levels and ocean tides. Rising tides are increasingly corrupting freshwater supplies.

In 1994, 51 small island nations met in Barbados and formulated a program of action. The program was only partly implemented, as foreign development aid declined. Assistance to small islands totaled \$2.3 billion in 1994, falling to \$1.7 billion in 2001.

In January 2005, on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, the small island nations met once again under the auspices of the United Nations to examine the threats to their existence.

At the conference, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), expressed deep concern about the effects of carbon monoxide emissions on the environment. According to *The Independent* (UK), Pachauri emphasized the urgency of the situation by telling conference attendees, "Climate change is for real. We have just a small window of opportunity and it is closing rather rapidly. There is not a moment to lose."

According to a 2004 Environmental Defense Fund study on global warming called "The Heat is On," sea levels rose 4-8 inches in

the 20th century. This rise, the study stated, has occurred ten times more rapidly than rising in the previous three millennia. The study also reported that as the carbon monoxide levels in the atmosphere have driven global temperatures upward, "wild weather" has become more and more common.

"El Niño events, which trigger devastating weather changes in the Eastern Pacific and many other parts of the world, have become more frequent since 1976," the study stated.

Conference delegates described the effects of global warming that they've already observed. In February 2004, the nine islands of the low-lying atoll of Tuvalu were submerged by "king tides." These tides washed over the lowest points of the country, whose highest elevation is just 15 feet above sea level. Inhabitants said such tides, once rare for the islands, now occur almost every two years.

Meanwhile, several countries are attempting to react and adapt to climate change. Mauritius, for example, has established units for monitoring sea levels.

But global warming isn't the only environmental hazard that small Pacific islands face. The Dec. 26 tsunami, which experts say killed as many as 288,000 people across the Indian Ocean from Indonesia to Somalia, caused serious damage to more than 40 islands in the Maldives.

One outcome of the Mauritius conference was a call for a worldwide early-warning systems for natural disasters. Currently, the tsunami warning system implemented in 1968 in the Pacific Ocean is the only one in the world. At the conference, The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presented plans for an Indian Ocean warning system, including deep water buoys, tide gauges and a regional alert center. The system would cost \$30 million.

A warning system could help islanders prepare for future tsunamis in time, but for now, islanders focus on the more immediate task of rebuilding in the wake of the disaster.

Nineteen islands in the Maldives are now uninhabitable. Mohamed Latheef, the Maldives representative to the U.N., said that revitalizing the remaining islands would require substantial foreign aid.

news analysis

U.S. Backs Colombian Kidnapping in Caracas

BY JAMES PETRAS

A major diplomatic and political conflict has exploded between Colombia and Venezuela after the revelation of a Colombian government covert operation in Venezuela, involving the recruitment of Venezuelan military and security officers in the kidnapping of a Colombian leftist leader. Following an investigation by the Venezuelan Ministry of Interior and reports and testimony from journalists and other political observers, it was determined that the highest echelons of the Colombian government, including President Uribe, planned and executed this onslaught on Venezuelan sovereignty.

Once direct Colombian involvement was established, the Venezuelan government demanded a public apology from the Colombian government while seeking a diplomatic solution by blaming Colombian Presidential advisers. The Colombian regime took the offensive, launching an aggressive defense of its involvement in the violation of Venezuelan sovereignty and, beyond that, seeking to establish in advance, under the rationale of "national security," the legitimacy of future acts of aggression. As a result, President Chavez has recalled the Venezuelan Ambassador from Bogota, and suspended all state-to-state commercial and political agreements pending an official state apology.

In response the U.S. Government gave unconditional support to the Colombian violation of Venezuelan sovereignty and urged the Uribe regime to push the conflict further. What began as a diplomatic conflict over a specific incident has turned into major, defining crises in U.S. and Latin American political relations with potentially explosive military, economic and political consequences for the entire region.

In justifying the kidnapping of Rodrigo Granda, the Colombian

leftist leader, the Uribe regime has promulgated a new foreign policy doctrine which echoes that of the Bush administration: the right of unilateral intervention in any country in which the Colombian government perceives or claims is harboring or providing refuge to political adversaries (which the regime labels as "terrorists") which might threaten the security of the state. The Uribe doctrine of unilateral intervention echoes the preventive war speech, enunciated in late 2001 by President Bush.

The Uribe doctrine clearly echoes Washington's global pronouncements. While the immediate point of aggression involves Colombia's relations to Venezuela, the Uribe doctrine lays the basis for unilateral military intervention anywhere in the hemisphere. Uribe's doctrine is a threat to sovereignty of any country in the hemisphere: its intervention in Venezuela and the justification provides a precedent for future aggression.

Colombia's adoption and implementation of the extraterritorial policy as part of its strategy of unilateral intervention is not coincidental, as the Colombian security forces have been trained and advised by U.S. and Israeli secret agencies. More directly, through its \$3 billion dollar military aid program Washington is in a command-and-control position within all sectors of the Colombian state and thus able to determine the security doctrine of the Uribe regime.

Uribe has been a long-time, large-scale practitioner of death squad politics prior to his ascendancy to the Presidency and prior to receiving large scale U.S. aid. By borrowing the Bush Doctrine from his patron-state, Uribe has internationalized the terror practices which he has pursued for the past 20 years within Colombia.

This is an excerpt of an article that originally appeared on the website counterpunch.org

Power Struggle

2005 WILL BE THE YEAR THAT DETERMINES U.S. FATE IN IRAQ

BY A.K. GUPTA

While the world's eyes are on who will take power in Iraq once votes are counted in the Jan. 30 national elections, there is another power struggle that may hold greater sway over Iraq's future: the war over the economy and infrastructure.

Despite nearly two years of U.S. occupation and attempted reconstruction, Iraq is worse off economically than when Saddam Hussein ruled a sanctions-crippled country. Oil exports are lower than in early 2003, there is less electricity and an extreme shortage of refined fuels, child malnutrition has doubled, prices for many food items have skyrocketed, and even water supplies have been cut off in Baghdad, according to a Jan. 21 Reuters report.

The collapse of basic services stems from insurgent attacks, rampant corruption and failed reconstruction. Iraqis blame either the Americans or Iraq's interim government. Whatever government takes power will have to confront a resilient insurgency bent on creating chaos to chase out American forces.

Since the assault on Falluja last November, the insurgency has shifted tactics to stay ahead of U.S. forces. U.S. casualties in January are barely one-third of the 137 Americans who died in November, but attacks on Iraqi security forces, translators, reconstruction workers and government employees have multiplied, as has sabotage of oil pipelines, electrical facilities and commerce.

NO FOOD, NO GAS, NO WATER

In Baghdad — home to 20 percent of Iraq's population — electricity is down to a handful of hours a day, gas lines stretch for up to two days, there are reports of starvation and few can afford cooking gas or heating fuel for the winter nights. Much of the truck traffic has been halted as at least 70 Turkish nationals, mainly truckers, have been killed in Iraq. Turkish drivers have gone on strike in response, further curtailing the flow of goods into Iraq.

There are widespread reports that the fuel shortages have been worsened by police and government officials who siphon off supplies for black-market profiteering. This is no surprise as regimes that exist only at the whim of an occupying power (as in South Vietnam), are riddled with cronyism and corruption because the officials only represent their own interests.

It is in this hyper-violent atmosphere that elections are occurring. Iraqi election officials and the Bush administration have lowered the bar for success, saying a 50 percent turnout will be adequate, when such transitional elections in other countries have drawn more than 70 percent of eligible voters.

While there are clear fault lines among the main three ethnic groups — up to 90 percent of Kurds are expected to vote while as few as 5 percent of Sunni Arabs will do likewise — there are indications that many poorer Shiites, who comprise 60 percent of the population, will also sit out the vote. Many of them see the elections as irrelevant under U.S. occupation, 70 percent unemployment and a lack of basic services.

CIVIL WAR

Many observers fear that the elections may spark a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, but Dr. Juan Cole, a professor of history at the University of Michigan, sees this as unlikely.

Cole, who specializes in Shiite history, says that while "the dangers of ethnic conflict are very real in Iraq, Iraqis seem to me to be committed to the unity of the country." Apart from one incident in December, when a Shiite force, dubbed the Fury Brigades, attacked Sunni insurgents south of Baghdad, there hasn't been the type of ethnic-based militia battles that characterized civil wars in Lebanon and the Balkans.

However, Cole notes among the insurgents — who he says are "95 percent Iraqi" and made up of former Iraqi army elements, Baathists and extreme Sunni Arab Muslims known as Salafis — there are some who are stoking inter-ethnic conflict. Cole says some insurgents would like to "provoke Sunnite-Shiite mob violence to destabilize the country," rendering the country ungovernable and forcing out the Americans.

Shiites who follow the four Grand Ayatollahs in Najaf have not taken the bait, though, sensing that they can gain political power through the elections. If the elections are seen as legitimate by enough Iraqis, Cole expects the Shiites to reach out to Sunnis (though not Baathists) in drafting the new constitution. The big variables are which Sunnis and how they would be selected.

Sunni fears may be assuaged if Shiites demand a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces, as they have indicated. Yet in what may be a pre-emptive strike against such a move, the director of U.S. Army operations, Lt. Gen. James J. Lovelace, announced just days before the vote that the army plans to keep 120,000 troops in Iraq through 2006.

Additionally, says Cole, because the United States has made clear that "Iraq is going to be

ruled by Shiite Ayatollahs and Kurdish warlords... Sunnis oppose that to a man."

It is in the North where civil war is a real possibility. Cole says while the Shiites don't talk about revenge, "the Kurds sometimes do." Plus, Kurdish leaders are pushing for political autonomy and control over vast oil reserves around Kirkuk — putting them in conflict with Shiite leaders who favor a strong central government. The ethnic stew is more complex in the North, with large populations of Arabs and Turkmen opposed to Kurdish hegemony. And Turkey, which invaded northern Iraq in the nineties, has reportedly drawn up plans to do so again as armed Kurdish separatists from Turkey have found refuge there.

UNKNOWN CANDIDATES

While the Bush administration touts Iraq's election as a democratic exercise, the conditions under which the vote is occurring are far from free and fair. Those Iraqis who choose to vote for a 275-member national assembly will have to navigate among 111 different slates with some 7,400 candidates. (Iraqis will also elect governors in each of the nation's 18 provinces.)

The problem is, few candidates are known to the public. Candidates and electoral workers have been assassinated and leaflets have been circulating threatening anyone who votes. Consequently, few candidates have released their names, and even less are campaigning in public. The best means for disseminating information in the war-battered country is television, and the only national television station is the U.S.-financed and controlled Al Iraqiya.

As part of the security measures, the locations of polling places are being kept secret. In addition, there will be a three-day nighttime curfew, travel between provinces will be banned, borders sealed, Baghdad's international airport shut down, the cell phone network (the only working phone system) turned off, driving outlawed (security forces are authorized to shoot at any unofficial cars on the road). To top it off, voters will cast their ballots under the guns of more than 300,000 American, international and Iraqi troops.

Coming on the heels of the razing of Falluja, few Sunni Arabs are inclined to participate. The outcome is largely preordained: Kurds will vote overwhelmingly for the Kurdistan Alliance list, composed of the two main Kurdish parties and most Shiites will probably vote either for the United Iraqi Alliance, endorsed by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, or the secular Iraqi List headed by Ayad Allawi, interim prime minister. Allawi is bene-

fitting from regular coverage on Al Iraqiya as well as his image as a ruthless strongman in the car-bombing capital of the world.

Because most Sunnis have shunned the security forces, some observers note this will be an election for Shiites and Kurds guarded by Shiites and Kurds. Even if the elections can weather an all-out insurgent attack on many of the 5,000 polling places, those elected will hardly represent average Iraqis. Most of the leading candidates, especially for top government posts, are exiles.

The New York Times notes that of the four Shiites who are front-runners for prime minister — Iraqi Finance Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi; Ibrahaim Jofferey, the head of the Dawa Party; Hussein Shahristani, a nuclear scientist; and the Pentagon's former golden boy, Ahmad Chalabi — all are exiles.

Also, Shiites are not the monolithic group often portrayed. They are split between secular and religious, with further divisions between these groupings, and there is significant intermarriage between Shiites and Sunnis. The biggest wild card is followers of cleric Moqtada Sadr.

While Sadr's movement of poor, young, urban Shiites is not boycotting the election, neither is it endorsing it. According to the *Washington Post*, Sadr released a statement in early January that read in part, "I personally will stay away [from the elections] until the occupiers stay away from them, and until our beloved Sunnis participate in them... Otherwise they [the elections] will lack legitimacy and democracy."

Sadr's supporters tend to back the insurgency, which mitigates against civil war between the two groups, but they seem disinclined to pick up guns again. They are betting on mass-based street action as the way to exert their influence. In particular, they are focusing anger on the comatose economy and crumbling services.

One Sadr supporter in Baghdad told the *Washington Post*, "The elections are very important for Sistani, but what about the other things?... What about food, kerosene, food? People are starving now."

Sadr and his supporters are critical of Sistani, an adherent of "quietism," which argues against direct clerical involvement in politics, as in Iran. In a play on words, Sadr's supporters deride Sistani as the "silent authority."

While a Shiite government may be successful in reaching out to some Sunnis, the insurgency will continue to rage. Sunnis insurgents who form a deposed elite have little to gain from supporting a government dominated by Shiites and Kurds.

If a new government is fractured by the rivalries of competing parties and personalities, it will be incapable of dealing with rising anger over the lack of services and security. Having so many slates on the ballot, which are themselves composed of fractious parties of all imaginable stripes, is a recipe for paralysis. The new government will also be operating under U.S.-imposed laws on everything from national security to economic policy.

In all likelihood, 2005 will determine if the insurgency can be isolated or if it will spread. If it spreads, the impact will be felt in the wider region, on the U.S. project to reconfigure in the Middle East and even on Bush's sweeping agenda for a second term.

For More, check Indydependent.org



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SUNDAY, FEB. 6 @ 2PM
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Children's Reading: Flying Free with author Jennifer C. Gregg Flying free is the first series for children of LGBT families (ages 2-6)

TUES. FEB 8TH @ 7PM
\$5 Suggested Donation
Film Screening: Mardi Gras Made in China

FRIDAY FEB 11TH @ 7PM
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Reading and Discussion: THE DEBT THREAT: How Debt is Destroying the Developing World with Author Noreena Hertz

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

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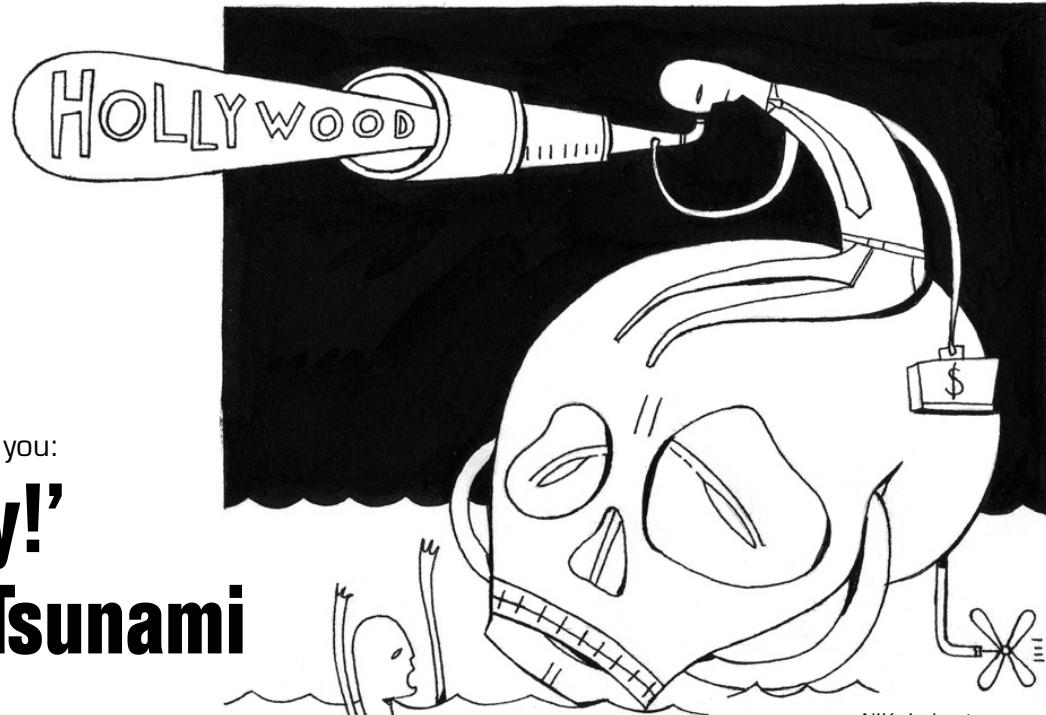
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Reviews



NIK: Indyartsnyc.org

coming soon to a theater near you:

'Carried Away!' Hollywood's Tsunami

What is the price of charity? As soldiers and emergency volunteers hand out free water, food and medicine to tsunami survivors, we can ask what the United States gets in return. It could be the movie rights.

After the global wave of sympathy and cash recedes, the West will immortalize its generosity with a movie. As you read this, film producers are dusting off disaster movie scripts and searching for angles. Brad Pitt and Jennifer Anniston will star in it, since their split-up traumatized Americans as much as the tsunami itself. The Hollywood power couple replaced it on the front cover of magazines and as the topic of talk shows within days of the disaster.

Let's imagine the plot. Brad plays a geologist obsessed with predicting earthquakes. He fidgets his glasses, signaling the

character's nerdy focus on facts. His career is staked on the prediction of a huge earthquake in the Indian Ocean. No one believes him. In Hollywood films, the Big Warning has to be dismissed to show the arrogant blindness of people in authority.

Jen plays his wife tired of his predictions. He pleads for one last chance. Days go by. The ocean is calm. After gambling on his failed calculations she leaves him for a business man acted by Donald Trump.

Months peel off the calendar. Brad grows stubble. Our geologist is losing his way until his Samoan friend calls with strange readings from the sea floor of the Indian Ocean. Brad knows it's the Big One. His ex-wife frolics on the shores of Sumatra with her new fiancé. In a nail-biting scene, she sees his name on her cell-phone and hangs up. He calls again and again until Jen

hurls the phone into the ocean, yelling that she is free of her past.

Racing against time, Brad helicopters to Sumatra. He drives, crashes the jeep then runs to the beach yelling for her. Jen turns and huffs. Trump holds an inflatable duck around his hips. Each take turns speaking over the other as birds fly from the trees and elephants trample up the jungle with tourists on their backs. Brad looks into the camera and says, "It's here."

A dark line creases the horizon. The sea rises into the sky. They run. An exploding crash of foam chases them through the jungles, snapping trees, sucking people into it. The watery death of nameless locals heightens the preciousness of Brad and Jen's white American lives.

In the DVD special features, deleted scenes will show real tsunami survivors breaking down on the film set from post-trau-

matic stress. The director, wanting authentic emotion, keeps the cameras rolling.

All three are carried into the ocean. Trump abandons them and swims away with his inflatable duck. Brad and Jen tread water. Tired by sun and thirst they confess their love for each other. A splintered fishing boat floats by, they climb on it and in a nod to Noah's Ark, rescue other couples from the water. Soon an international cast rides the boat with them. Under the leadership of the American power couple, they paddle back to shore to save lives.

Days later Brad and Jen stand on a beach. A shriveled inflatable duck rolls on shore. They hold each other tighter. In a voice-over Brad says, "In the human heart there are tensions as powerful as any in the earth, sometimes they snap and send huge emotions to the surface of our lives. I don't know what comes next for us, but at least we survived the wave."

It's inevitable. The tsunami is coming to a theater near you. The West, the United States in particular, will stage its own benevolence against the backdrop of the tragedy. If the waves of sentimentality suck you away, remember, you can use your seat cushions as a floatation device.

—NICHOLAS POWERS

JOHN HESS, PRESS MAVERICK, DIES



By David Lindorff

American journalism lost one of its finest practitioners, *The New York Times* lost its conscience, and I lost a good friend and mentor with the death of John L. Hess, who died on Jan. 20 in his sleep at the age of 87.

John, who only recently finished a devastating and entertaining book on his years at *The New York Times* (*My Times: a Memoir of Dissent*) worked right up to the end, reading incisive and wryly witty commentaries on WBAI, and filing equally important com-

mentaries on national and global events on his own website.

John was the kind of journalist you rarely see any more — intensely committed to his craft, both as reporter and writer, and as human being. He had no interest in promotions and power — remaining a reporter all his career and shunning the chance for a private office that comes with senior editorship. He was always willing to push for the truth, a habit that ended up getting him put onto beats that were meant, probably, to drive him away. Instead, as when John was put on the food beat by his bosses at the *Times*, he, with his food expert wife Karen, turned exile into opportunity, going after the corruption and inanity that are endemic in the New York restaurant and restaurant reviewing complex.

As an investigative reporter, John was nothing short of exemplary. Less of a self-promoter than his contemporaries Jimmy Breslin and the late Jack Newfield, his exposé of New York State's nursing home scandals stands today as

a model of what an aggressive and uncompromising Fourth Estate can do if it wants to, and is easily equal in importance to anything they or other great journalists have done.

A longer version of this article appears on Counterpunch.org

Terminal Zionism

Somewhere between lament and analysis, Michel Warschawski's short report on the state of Israeli politics is a must read for anyone trying to get a handle on why peace in the Middle East is so elusive.

Ostensibly founded as a refuge for European Jews, Israel was imposed as a "state of the Jewish people" on a land already populated, mostly with Muslim Arabs. Having fully absorbed the colonial chauvinism of their time, as manifested in the *Nakba* when 800,000 Palestinians were driven

TOWARD AN OPEN TOMB: THE CRISIS OF ISRAELI SOCIETY
By Michel Warschawski
Monthly Review Press, 2004

from their homes and land, the early Zionists also practiced a relatively high degree of democracy and tolerance within their own society. According to the author, a longtime Israeli dissident, even that paltry virtue is spent.

For American Jews raised on the notion that Israel is their last, best hope, *Toward An Open Tomb* is a necessary reality check on how fascism isn't just something that happens to other people. —JED BRANDT

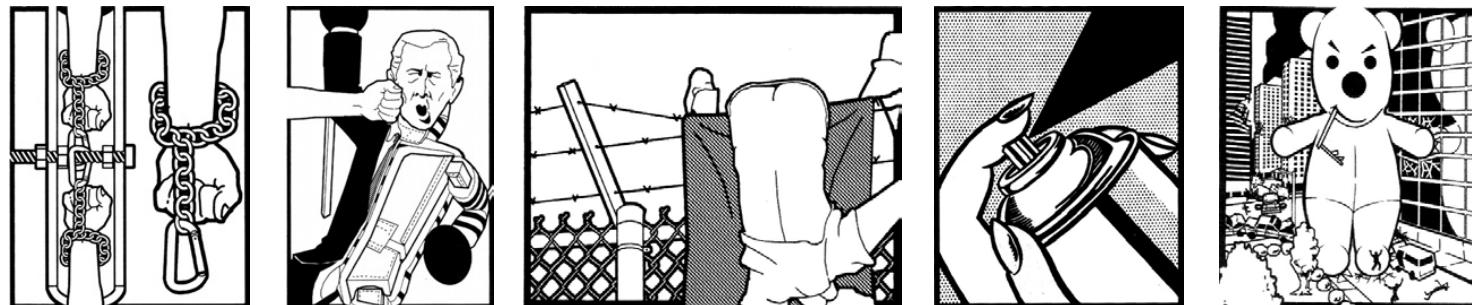
Nazis on Revue

HITLER'S HIT PARADE
Dirs. Oliver Aixer and Susanne Benze
75 min., 2004

Contrary to popular belief, most Nazi propaganda wasn't Leni Riefenstahl-style *Triumph of the Will* indoctrination. Joseph Goebbel's horrible legacy as minister of propaganda left behind fluff like glitzy musicals and romantic comedies that, given overdubs, wouldn't look out of place in a Golden Age of



AND SO FORTH: Lower East Side artist Seth Tobocman projects his work as part of the two day conference *And So Forth: A Post-Inaugural Assembly*. Visual and performance artists met Jan. 22 and 23 in Bushwick to discuss the role of art and activism, with an emphasis on the role of art as social catalyst after the radical arts explosion of the past two years. The confab was organized by Amnesty International's Firefly Project, Theaters Against War, Art Is Permitted Everywhere and VisualizeResistance.org. —JB



You Can Blow Up a Social Relationship

One of America's largest industries is the business of pleasure. Porn, coke and rock n' roll. Advertising works by convincing us that our yearning for freedom can be satisfied by a new car, our hunger for friendship with a cell phone and our desire for excitement with liquor. What Crimethinc does is reveal the perversity of this situation; they claim that our desires can only be met by real human liberation.

Using the methods of advertising, they subvert it. They draw out the germ of revolutionary content latent in pop culture, proposing to "hijack the brief moments of authentic living we're permitted and turn them upon the status quo that circumscribes them."

Crimethinc is the American heir to situationism, born in punk shows and hopped trains instead of cafés and garrets. They

RECIPES FOR DISASTER: AN ANARCHIST COOKBOOK

By Crimethinc Workers Collective

Crimethinc, 2005

have yet to inspire a May '68 but in their second book, *Recipes for Disaster*, they move from their previous manifestos and pamphlets to suggestions for taking action. They offer up a "moveable feast," with 61 recipes ranging from "Antifascist Action" to "How to Make a Bicycle into a Record Player" to "Squatting." All are forms of direct action, or "acting directly to meet needs." (This book turns "just do it" into an anarchist slogan.) And nearly all take the status quo as a given.

You can't dumpster-dive if people aren't wasting food, you can't make newspaper wraps if there are no newspapers and you can't shoplift if there are no more

Hollywood retrospective. That's the disturbing evidence on display in *Hitler's Hit Parade*, a 75-minute montage of Nazi era entertainment, where disposable pop songs, animated shorts, commercials and home movies juxtapose with more openly vile Hitler tributes and anti-Semitic material from the Third Reich.

Filmmakers Oliver Aixer and Susanne Benze deftly combine and overlay images to juxtapose an insidious evil underneath an over-enthusiastically cheery exterior. The chorus line of athletic Aryan women performing a number entitled "Health! Strength is Joy" is one of many clips demonstrating how the Nazis' interest in classical

aesthetic beauty barely concealed a fetishistic obsession with uniformity and obedience. As film scholar Eric Rentschler once wrote, "Nazi escapist fare offered no escape from the Nazi status quo." *Hitler's Hit Parade* mirrors the structure and purpose of *The Atomic Café*, a found footage montage of educational and industrial films from the height of the Cold War. While it never achieves the narrative flow of *The Atomic Café*, *Hitler's Hit Parade* still leaves the viewer confronting a contemporary media landscape of similarly sugar-coated radio hits and mindless television programs that only unconsciously reflect a troubled reality here in "freedom loving" America. Think of this film if you decide to watch the Super Bowl.

—MICHAEL JOSHUA ROWIN

Welcome to the Hotel Rwanda

HOTEL RWANDA
Dir. Terry George
121 min., 2004

Depicting genocide is possibly the most difficult of cinematic challenges: how to properly handle historical perspective, emotional resonance, and artistic restraint in the face of the "unrepresentable"? Terry George achieves all this in *Hotel*

Rwanda. In fact, his avoidance of *Schindler's List*-style self-defeating trap of stylization is remarkable. *Hotel Rwanda* is of the based-on-a-true story variety that has much in common with that of Oskar Schindler. In 1994, during the Hutu uprising in Rwanda, Paul Rusesabagina saved the life of 1,200 Tutsis who found refuge in the classy international hotel he managed. Director Terry George doesn't merely portray the events, but continuously shames the West (especially the United Nations) and depicts the build-up to the atrocities with gut-wrenching disbelief and horror.

Don Cheadle's incredible performance as Rusesabagina is one of the many questionable elements of *Hotel Rwanda* that raise the question: is this film, with its English-speaking cast and a puzzling PG-13 level of violence — too palatable to Western audiences? I don't think so, even considering the film's unavoidable flaws. The overbearing soundtrack can be forgiven as the raw and simultaneously humble tone of the film speaks for itself. Ultimately, despite a limited lens through which to view such an unimaginable human disaster, *Hotel Rwanda* settles on a tone of immediate realism rather than academic detachment, a tactic perhaps most appropriate for getting audiences to understand a genocide that to this day has been generally forgotten by the world.

—MICHAEL JOSHUA ROWIN



Keeping Free Behind Bars

No Surrender collects two decades of former-Weather Underground militant David Gilbert's prison writings.

Gilbert came of age during the Civil Rights movement, which he explains, **NO SURRENDER** By David Gilbert Arm The Spirit, 2004 "showed me more of a sense of humanity and nobility of purpose than I found in the white suburbs where I had grown up." In 1962 he joined the Congress of Racial Equality, and in 1965 began working against the war in Vietnam at Columbia University where he co-founded the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) chapter that helped lead the famous student strike of 1968.

In the early 1970s he helped form the Weather Underground Organization (WUO). According to Gilbert, they took up arms "in response to the murderous government assault on the Black Liberation Movement and the unending, massive bombing of Vietnam." He spent ten years underground until he was arrested in 1981 following a failed armored car robbery in upstate New York.

A unit of the Black Liberation Army and allied white revolutionaries had attempted to rob a Brinks truck. An ensuing shoot-out left a guard and two police officers dead. Several alleged participants were arrested and given long sentences whether they played an active part or not.

Gilbert is at his best when giving frank responses to questions about his past actions and lessons for today. A primary example is his expressed regret and sadness about the killing of the security guard, and the two police officers and comrades who were killed in the course of events.

"Coming of Age Politically at Columbia" and his short essays on SDS and WUO are excellent examples of the kind of reflection that is needed in organized resistance. His critiques of the Leninist model of organization, male supremacy, egotism and sectarianism in the Weather Underground are crucial for thinking about activism today.

Gilbert provides insight and sharp analysis about AIDS, popular social movements, challenging male supremacy and imperialism, and ending white supremacy.

As a white male struggling to negotiate what it means to fight with love for all people, challenge privilege and develop an affirming and healthy identity, David Gilbert holds a special place in my heart — not because I unquestioningly view him as a role model, but for his commitment to liberation and ability to openly evaluate his own work.

—CHRIS CRASS

write for the **Indy**

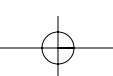
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FRI JAN 28

9 p.m. • \$10
SOUTH EAST ASIA RELIEF BENEFIT
Come join us for a night of live entertainment to raise money for the South East Asia relief effort. Live performances by Jean Grae, E.O.W., spoken word poets at 10 p.m. Party at 11:30 p.m. with DJ Snooze spinning hip hop, reggae, classics and 80s. Also accepting blankets as additional donations. Southpaw, 125 5th Ave. b/w Sterling and St. John, Brooklyn, www.spsounds.com

SAT JAN 29

1 - 4 p.m. • Free
CHILDREN'S READING AND BASKETWEAVING
A reading of Margie Clary's children's book *A Sweet, Sweet Basket* will be followed by a discussion of the history and traditions of African basketweaving. Participants will create their own baskets to take home. South Street Seaport Museum, 12 Fulton St. 212.748.8758

1 - 2:30 p.m. • Free
YOUNG PEOPLE'S WRITING WORKSHOP
With local writer Jacqueline Woodson. Vox Pop Books Cafe, 1022 Cortelyou Road, Ditmas Park, Flatbush, Brooklyn, www.voxpopnet.net

SUN JAN 30

1 - 3 p.m. • Free
ARMED RESISTANCE AND BLACK LIBERATION STRUGGLE
Learn about the Movement and how you can participate in or contribute to its work. Founding members of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement will speak as part of the Malcolm X 80 Lecture Series. MXGM Office, 288 Atlantic Ave., 3rd floor 718-254-8800

2 p.m. • \$4 - 6
BROOKLYN WORKS
Tour a family-centered interactive exhibition about the working people of Brooklyn, their occupations, challenges, and resilience, and how they contributed to shaping the nation. Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St., Brooklyn Heights 718-222-4111

COMMUNITY CALENDAR JANUARY/FEBRUARY

roots organizations in "Housing Here & Now: Build It, Fix It, Save It," a march and rally to demand that Battery Park City money be used to build and preserve affordable housing, housing for low and moderate-income people, and permanent housing for homeless people living with AIDS.

March across Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall: gather 3:30 p.m. on Brooklyn side, or 4:30 in front of City Hall. 718-246-7923

THU FEB 3

6:30 p.m. • Free
PROTECT WEST HARLEM
The Coalition to Preserve Community, the grassroots group of West Harlem residents organizing to fight Columbia's efforts to build a new campus in the area, will meet to make plans and review successes. St. Mary's Church, 521 W. 126th St.

8 p.m. - 2 a.m. • \$10-\$20 Donation
EPICENTER: AID FOR ACEH

In collaboration with Acehnese activists, experimental music and visual artists will hold a fundraiser to benefit victims of the tsunami in the Indonesian province of Aceh. Clemente Soto Velez Center, 107 Suffolk Street

9 p.m. • free
PAUL ALEXANDER 9:00 P.M.
HOWARD FISHMAN 10:00 P.M.
PRETEND KING 11:00 P.M.

Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St. Williamsburg, Brooklyn, L train to Lorimer St. free music every night • cocktails and sandwiches, 718-302-3770

FRI FEB 4

6:30 p.m. • \$5-\$10 Donation
CELEBRATE CARIBBEAN RESISTANCE
Join us in a night of celebration of the Resistance and Revolutionary struggles of the Latin Caribbean. Eat Latin food and get an update on what's happening in Cuba and Puerto Rico, with the Cuban Five and the Puerto Rican political prisoners, and with the struggle for democracy and freedom in the Dominican Republic. St. Mary's Church, 521 W. 126th St. 718-601-4751

WED FEB 2

4:30 p.m. • Free
MARCH AND RALLY FOR HOUSING
Join NYC AIDS Housing Network, Make the Road by Walking, and many other city grass-

roots organizations in "Housing Here & Now: Build It, Fix It, Save It," a march and rally to demand that Battery Park City money be used to build and preserve affordable housing, housing for low and moderate-income people, and permanent housing for homeless people living with AIDS.

March across Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall: gather 3:30 p.m. on Brooklyn side, or 4:30 in front of City Hall. 718-246-7923

5:00 p.m. • free
OPEN MIC 5-8
WARREN MALONE 8:30 P.M.
MATTY CHARLES AND THE VALENTINES 10:00 P.M.

Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St. Williamsburg, Brooklyn, L train to Lorimer St. free music every night • cocktails and sandwiches, 718-302-3770

TUE FEB 8

7 p.m. • Free
LEARN ABOUT FILM FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERING
The 2005 Tribeca Film Festival (April 21 - May 1) is looking for volunteers to work in all areas of the Festival including special events, the box office, screenings, the Family Festival, and many other departments. At this Q&A session, organizers will tell you how to get involved. RSVP to volunteers@tribecafilmfestival.org.

Tribeca Cinemas
54 Varick Street 212-941-2404

SAT FEB 5

5 - 8 p.m. • free
SCRABBLE SATURDAYS
Are you an avid anagrammer? Do you know just what to do with a "Q"? Bring your lucky letters and a partner to doubles Scrabble every Saturday evening. Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St. Williamsburg, Brooklyn, L train to Lorimer St. free music every night • cocktails and sandwiches, 718-302-3770

SUN FEB 6

3 p.m. • \$3
OUR UNORGANIZED READING
an open poetry reading
Gallery/Performance Space
No Sign-Up. No Time Limit.
No Features. No Bullshit.
ABC No Rio , 156 Rivington Street
(between Clinton & Suffolk) 212-254-3697

9 p.m. • \$12

A NIGHT AGAINST THE WAR
Joe's Pub in the Public Theater hosts an evening of anti-war activists and Iraqi-American artists. Featured guests including Iraq War veteran Sgt. Jimmy Massey, musician Stephan Smith, playwright Heather Raffo and journalist Dahr Jamail (on the phone from Iraq). Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St., Manhattan www.joespub.com

9:00 p.m.

ISSA CABRERA
Isa Cabrera beautifully mixes jazz standards, Latin rhythms, and a New York soulful sensibility with her seductive voice and comfortable delivery. Come unwind and enjoy the evocative sounds of her band. CARLITOS Café y Galeria 1701 Lexington Ave., between 106 & 107 212-348-7044

**5:00 p.m. • free
OPEN MIC 5-8**

WARREN MALONE 8:30 P.M.

MATTY CHARLES AND THE VALENTINES 10:00 P.M.

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Tribeca Cinemas
54 Varick Street 212-941-2404

THU FEB 10 - FEB 28

adults: \$10 • children & students: \$6
DOCUMENTARY FORTNIGHT
MoMA's annual exhibition of nonfiction media features works that look at provocative issues around the world. Ranging from Patricio Guzman's *Salvador Allende* – about the ex-president of Chile – and Jos de Putter's *Alias Kurban Said* – a multilayered literary mystery, to a Director's Tribute honoring Belgian-French director Agnès Varda with the New York premiere of her new trilogy *Cinevadaphoto* and Ellen Spiro's *Troop 1500*, which follows Girl Scouts visiting their mothers in prison. Documentary Fortnight offers exciting perspectives on history, politics, culture, art, war, peace, and the human condition. Several works reveal the changing roles of women in Iran, Mauritania, the Palestinian territories, and Israel. Kim Dong-Won's *Repatriation* and Changjae Lee's *Edit* examine politics in North and South Korea. Several works center on music, from the Brazilian cattle callers of Marilia Rocha's *Aboio* to the songs of the Colombian drug wars in Juan Manuel Echavarría's *Mouths of Ash* and rock music among American troops in Iraq in George Gittoes's *Soundtrack to War*. The Museum of Modern Art 11 W 53 St. 212-708-9400 (Film admission tickets can be purchased in person only.)

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